

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT KS

SUBJECT: 74 ASSEMBLY SESSION ENDS IN TURMOIL

REF: SEOUL 8236

SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT DEC 17 PUSHED EIGHT BILLS THROUGH ASSEMBLY OVER OPPOSITION PROTEST IN FINAL BRIEF PLENARY SESSION MARKED BY CONFUSION AND SCUFFLING ON FLOOR. DEC 14 CONFRONTATION OVER CHONG IL-HYONG'S CALL FOR PRESIDENT PARK TO RESIGN AND THE RESULTING BRAWL (REFTEL) PREVENTED INTERPELLATIONS SCHEDULED FOR DEC 14-17. NDP HAS DECLARED ITSELF READY TO RESUME EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING THE DISRUPTION OF DEC 14 INTERPELLATION, GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION ENGAGED IN SERIES OF CHARGES AND COUNTER CHARGES OF MISCONDUCT ON FLOOR; GOVERNMENT ASKED FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST CHONG IL-HYONG FOR HIS REMARKS SLANDERING PRESIDENT, AND NDP MADE SIMILAR MOTION FOR ACTION AGAINST SONG HO-RIM FOR HIS PHYSICAL ASSAULT ON CHONG.

2. IN ENVIRONMENT OF CONFRONTATION, NDP DEMANDED THAT

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INTERPELLATIONS CONTINUE AS SCHEDULED, BUT NEW

AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE REACHED ON ASSEMBLY AGENDA. IN SPITE OF NDP PROTEST AND THREATS TO OBSTRUCT PROCEEDINGS, SPEAKER FINALLY CALLED PLENARY SESSION DEC 17 TO PASS "URGENTLY NEEDED BILLS" INCLUDING ASSEMBLY CONSENT TO RATIFY KOREA-JAPAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT AND BILLS NEEDED TO BACK UP RECENT ECONOMIC MEASURES.

3. OPPOSITION PROTEST ON FLOOR TWICE PREVENTED PASSAGE OF BILLS AND CAUSED SPEAKER TO CALL BRIEF RECESS. ON THIRD ATTEMPT SPEAKER DECLARED BILLS PASSED AND ADJOURNED ASSEMBLY.

4. ASSEMBLY SESSION ENDED OFFICIALLY DEC 18 WITHOUT CONVENING AGAIN. NO MENTION WAS MADE BY GOVT OR OPPOSITION OF POSSIBLE SPECIAL SESSION TO BE HELD IN FEB 1975. NDP HAS PROTESTED "ILLEGAL" PASSAGE OF BILLS, FILED NO-CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION AGAINST SPEAKER, AND HELD PARTY CAUCUS DEC 18 TO ANNOUNCE THAT ITS EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGN WILL RESUME IN LOCAL DISTRICTS.

5. PREDICTABLY, YI CHOL-SUNG HAS EXPRESSED TO EMBOFFS CRITICISM OF PARTY LEADERSHIP FOR GIVING GOVERNMENT CHANCE TO CALL OFF INTERPELLATIONS. OTHER NDP ASSEMBLYMEN, HOWEVER, HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY CONSIDER CHONG IL-HYONG'S REMARKS RELATIVELY MODERATE, AND PARTY SPOKESMAN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT CONG'S INTERPELLATION REFLECTED OFFICIAL PARTY POLICY.

6. COMMENT: BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION HAVE DRAWN CRITICISM FROM PRESS FOR FAILURE TO "NORMALIZE ASSEMBLY," AND THE ANTICS OF BOTH SIDES HAVE DONE NOTHING TO REMOVE POPULAR IMAGE OF ASSEMBLY AS BODY WITH LITTLE REAL STATURE OR IMPORTANCE. ON OTHER HAND, THE OPPOSITION DID GAIN CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROGRAM AND SUCCEEDED IN PUBLIC INTRODUCTION ON ASSEMBLY FLOOR OF CONSTITUTION ISSUE AND POSSIBILITY OF PRESIDENT PARK LEAVING OFFICE. THIS PROVIDES KIM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YONG-SAM A TAKE OFF POINT FROM WHICH TO RENEW HIS CAMPAIGN IN THE PROVINCES. ALSO DURING STORMY SESSION, AND IN SPITE OF CONSIDERABLE INTRA-PARTY FACTIONAL STRIFE, KIM YONG-SAM EVIDENTLY MAINTAINED RELATIVELY GOOD CONTROL OF NDP. GOVERNMENT, FOR ITS PART, DID MANAGE TO PASS BILLS WITH OPPOSITION PRESENT AND TO CONFINE NDP ACTIVITIES TO ASSEMBLY FLOOR.

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